

Protocol from notes and memory on a conversation with Octavio \_\_, member for Ribatejo of the Political Commission (PC) within the Central Comité (CC) of the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) in Alpiarça, Monday, the first of April 2013  
12:45 – 13:07

Account by Martin Kraemer Liehn written down on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2013 on the basis of notes taken down during the conversation and extensively so in the immediate aftermath.

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### 1. Scheduling history

On 1<sup>st</sup> April, I accidentally managed to have a word with Octavio \_\_, the political figure number one of PCP in the whole region including Alpiarça as one of its most member intensive centres (currently about 500 paying PCP members in an overall township population of 8.000). This conversation had been scheduled for all foreign voluntary painters active in Alpiarça on his own initiative already the year before. In December 2013 a date was fixed for Wednesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> of January 2014 3:00 o'clock p.m. After waiting that day in a group of three for about 40 minutes, we managed to interest a woman party member in the fact that the party official had made us come and did not show up himself. She rang him up that moment and managed to get two bits of useful information from first hand. One, that he was busy "to see a doctor" and would show up only later in Alpiarça and that only to attend a party meeting, not to realise the appointment with us. Second, he promised that he will come up to us with a new time schedule to meet on his own initiative very soon. As he knew perfectly where we lived (the next underneath him in party hierarchy had put us up there) he clarified on the phone that he would be able to reach us at any time to realise the necessary conversation in the very near future. We were contacted

by party officials subaltern to him many times over the following quarter of a year and we rarely missed the occasion to remind that there had been no delivery Octavio to this intention expressed already in 2012. We never received an answer on the issue and were equally never contacted by him in the course of the following three months. Instead, the door leading to the upstairs offices including his where he resides at least one working day every week were first modified as to be opened by visitors with greater effort, then modified a second time to physically prevent visitors from entering altogether. This move came quite as a surprise to many users of the centre we asked about it because the upper floor had been left freely accessible over more than 3 decades and THINGS HARDLY CHANGE AT ALL within the realm of PCP, so why should they suddenly start changing? People working at the basement of party premises would become vague on answering our questions repeated several times every week on end if Octavio was in and available maybe for the promised conversation. They would start to avoid eye-contact, a clear sign in Alpiarça back-door political relations that a stance of authority actually stands in-between the respondent and the material possibility of telling the full truth. So, there had been a decision already taken not to engage in further contact with us at the highest level of PCP interior life. Since the demise of Soviet tutelage there is no instance above the Portuguese Politbureau to address.

The initial two conversations in November and December 2012 with Politbureau member Octavio were as cordial as you can possibly imagine strangers to be received in provincial Portugal whom you positively expect to disappear soon. We searched the internet together to clarify that a tapestry hanging in the hall-ways of

the upper floor was not about Lenin, as assumed by the (one and only) genuinely active youth member of PCP local politics, but actually a present from GDR in the late 1970s or early 1980s featuring Ernst Thälmann. This clarification became some kind of a legend as it was colportated by a João Osorio two months later to party elders. On the contrary, we had always stressed that we are decided to stay 3 months and test all possibilities seriously where we could possibly make a voluntary mural painting in public space, i.e. precisely until 19<sup>th</sup> of February, this date was circulated by us three months prior in written form. The PCP rejection which never was made explicit was mirrored by the municipality's factual rejection where PCP holds an absolute majority (as 1974-1998 and 2009-2013). Curiously enough, the municipality carved in to our insistence on Monday, 18<sup>th</sup> of February after we had managed to seriously lobby party elders and retired party veterans of the town in our favour on the eve of a public event on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup>. The saying goes that nothing hierarchically lower in rank can move a Portuguese macho once he has got hold of a power position. And there is really only one exception on earth: his grand-father. Of course this is moralising economics and it does not always carry through to actual delivery. But the day-to-day political economy of close to empty promising in Portuguese provincial politics can get a serious shift when a grand-father gets involved, that's a fact. So on 18<sup>th</sup> of February after 3 full months of lobbying on all levels, we finally got what the President of the municipality had hinted at in a written almost-inviting letter of 9<sup>th</sup> November 2012: a possibly positive decision on whether to welcome mural painting by volunteers. In the following week Dora-Joao the assistant charged with handling contacts with the painters in his political secretariat headed by Joao Osorio (simultaneously the PCP official number one for the territory of Alpiarça)

promised in a telephone conversation with the painting collective in Italy that a decision will be taken by Friday 16<sup>th</sup> November. When we arrived the following Tuesday, 20<sup>th</sup> November 10:00 am there was no decision. And there was to be no decision in spite of 4 meetings lasting up to 3 hours during the whole of the forthcoming three months. It was exactly on the day before we had announced to leave a quarter year before that the hardly explicable blockade and strange silence on the matter was broken by the municipality and it quite surprisingly to us actually, issued a commitment which could even be pinned down logistically. Of course we volunteered to be available for another two-and-a-half months to stick to this commitment. The planned execution of murals had two phases and covered two premises: a 500 square metre object by the municipality to be painted in a secco, a dry wall painting technique, and a 500 square metre object owned by the Portuguese communist Party to be painted in the artistically more rewarding and architecturally more consistent wet-on-wet-limestone painting technique, famous as "a fresco", for which you could hardly find three or four active painters experienced enough on big surfaces to execute a fresco on such a scale with serious technical preparatory training limited to two academies in the whole of Europe, Madrid and Warszawa, and even there both work-shops going through a prolonged structural crisis for more than a decade already. Obviously, as the municipality staff had not grasped what a fresco can offer and what it demands technically in more than 10 hours of meetings and explication on photographic and material samples and models of various sizes the party hierarchy cared enough only to catch the hear-tell reported by the municipal officials.

The meeting with Octavio had been cordially scheduled to explain in detail the technical and logistical implications of restoring the court of the PCP premises (centro do trabalho) littered by rubble of incomplete building break-down and demolition and its walls (once having a revolutionary wall painting on them) now merely smeared on with phallic symbols of purile obscenities. When you enter the courtyard of PCP Alpiarça you are reminded of back-yards in Chechnya, a war zone. It is a highly masculinised place with no woman showing up, though there is a bar nearby with close to permanent women presence (predominantly staffers). Sometimes, the male-only peer-group in the yard would grill some meat in the rubbles while "waiting for a superior to arrive". But most of the time it is just a smoking outlet for smoking in the party's quite popular bar area has been out-lawed by neo-liberal health care privatisation drives with special intensity in Portugal during the last decade. The court yard is actually counting the same presence of visitors on a monthly average as the whole centre, which is quite to the contrary neatly whitewashed and its walls kept in perfect Alpiarça-type cement regularity, though somewhat empty all the year through. All great festivities are celebrated in other premises. With a visit by the PCP number one nationally effected in mid-December 2012 (jantar) in private representative preises let by the affluent owner (not a PCP member) free of charge and a scheduled visit but later cancelled for 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 2013, when de Sousa preferred to tour Vietnam, in the more Spartan PCP festive hall at the exposition complex. The Centro do trabalho is for everyday business. Its visible material activity is the distribution of centrally issued propaganda material. The main logistic task is the distribution and accounting for the weekly newspaper selling Avante. The municipal election posters on hardware are stored in their half hundred there up to the present

day, though featuring the historic election date and thus hardly reusable. The only meeting we could get aware of is of a party inner circle of around 7 persons. The meeting hall for up to a hundred persons was to our knowledge not used in the 5 months we participated in Alpiarça social life. The same applies to a row of offices besides Octavio's. On hitting the office level randomly on about 30 occasions over three months until the door to the staircase was finally shut we hit on a meeting of an in-group once, Octavio twice, once he was accompanied by only active youth politician (16 years old) who is commonly defined by party elders over his family ties to party dignities in Évora. Once we hit on the youth politician alone in the company of a friend eating meat in one of the normally unused offices. Obviously they were celebrating a past-time ordinary male party affiliates share in the courtyard in a more privileged place. Apart from the bar which has the full-blown social radiance of a Portuguese popular rural bar, we could not whiteness any other social life in the premises, and believe us – we did try to!

In plain terms, party life has fallen down on minimal routine and the most basis representation of simple hierarchical relations. The dynamics of beverage and snack consumption at the bar cannot brag of political discussion. The bar edition of the party weekly journal *Avante* is not always easy to find even with the help of experienced bar dwellers. On my 30 visits I never found anyone reading the party newspaper. The only newspaper I saw in use were some bourgeois tabloid formats provided free of charge by the family business renting the bar from PSP. Television discourse is predominant in the bar space. Actually, weekly going through the bulletin from top to bottom within hours of its delivery to party premises in Alpiarça, it proved almost impossible to discuss

issues raised by the party journal with anyone tied to party affairs in Alpiarça within the week that followed, bar visitor or party official as it turned out they would either not read or prefer not to express an opinion about what they had read.

## 2. Starting point of the long-promised conversation

As I got the usual evasive answers about Octavio maybe being available for a conversation at the bar, I actually saw him leaving the building through the main entrance. I caught up with him on the pavement before the PCP building, him not having reached his car yet close enough to begin to open it and enter it. It was quite surprising for me that I actually succeeded in engaging him in a dialogue. He kind of waited what would come from me with a distanced passive air, assuming a usual stance of Alpiarça officials first pretending to hear about it for the first time and really not knowing anything about it (when later they show to be perfectly informed through a whole variety of back-channels). I started off expressing our astonishment how little the party had made of our voluntary stance against the austerity regime in the Alpiarça context. We had obviously overlapping agendas in mobilising against EU austerity capitalism. The PCP in municipal functions had sort-of invited us to Alpiarça and cared to put us up provisionally in its derelict and dysfunctional camping premises. Being sort of guests of theirs in Alpiarça, we had to put up with rather high expenses in relation to our Ukrainian budgets for coming here, maintaining ourselves and on top of it financing the building materials, e.g. one ton of hydrated limestone stored already in the courtyard of PCP on our account and now not usable due to the notoriously inexplicit but by now obvious

dismissal of our joint planning for our painting since November. I explained that we were willing incurring the cost of 19 weeks of living expenses by ourselves, though there were some promises made to finance items by the municipality (e.g. natural gas). But it was not satisfactory that out of 19 weeks we were let to paint effectively only 3 weeks. I asked him to imagine the scope of visual change we could have brought to Alpiarça if just we had been allowed to be active in the public space for a greater share of time. At this point, Octavio could have countered with general remarks about better co-operation in some vague future. Instead he said nothing, just presented the raised eyebrows which are in use by persons of authority in Alpiarça to indicate both dismissal and the need for the supplicant to supply further information including such to the supplicant's disadvantage if any reaction in words is to be provoked.

### 3. cadre focus

To pin things down in any kind there was hardly a way around raising cadre politics at that point of conversation. So I made a case against the back-stabbing stance of his immediate next person in the chain of party command, João Osorio. I told him about the testimonies we had obtained in Lisbon witnessing the fabrication and rather astonishing distortions of reality produced by his office in the municipality (that's how the caller authenticated their stance<sup>3</sup> in Lisbon, as representing the secretary of the municipality according to the testimony of the director of Saramago foundation, Machado\_ (the secretary of the president's administration being João Osorio). At this point in the conversation Octavio would not indicate having received or read our written fact sheet on the data collected for the case submitted to him via

private channels 4 days prior. But he now took a full-blown stance in defence of Osorio, politically covering his attitude a 100% with an astonishing acknowledgement rather unlikely to be factually true: that he, Octavio himself was the caller putting out the denunciations we retraced with the help of the testimony of the director at Saramago foundation. I reminded him of the 5 lies vital in this denunciation we had documented in written form. He claimed, all the while avoiding eye-contact up to the point of running to the most unexpected resort of focal points that to his mind there were no lies involved. I said, more influential in a practical sense were the lies we were told in the form of fake promises by party officials in Alpiarça during the last 5 months. I stressed that it is more helpful to hear about an unfavourable decision at once and in all sharpness than to have it disguised by a set of untruthful but well-sounding promises. What promises, he interrogated. I picked the most blatant example: João Osorio, declaring on 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 2013, 16:30, that "By 1<sup>st</sup> of March there will be 20 scaffolding units ready for use", ie. to execute the fresco on 500 square metres "at PCP centro do trabalho courtyards" with operations to be finished until mid-April as outlined in the planning session with the president and Celestino Brasileiro on the preceding Monday.

At this point Octavio listened carefully and asked back. "He has promised you that?" "Yes, he has." "Has he?" he wondered musingly, yet with a distinctly malignant smile and said "20 scaffoldings, ridiculous".

4.the political economy of dealing out misleading promises instead of

transparency on tough decisions already taken

Receiving the information on the 22.2. promise with somewhat of a (maybe enacted) astonishment, Octavio remained perfectly unmoved by the following account on what we witnessed when delivery failed by 1<sup>st</sup> of March. We managed to corner and thus speak to João about his broken promise on the very closing of the workday of the 1<sup>st</sup> of March. Before he escaped to the toilets, he invited us to speak to him on Sunday March 3<sup>rd</sup> at the parties anniversary celebrations, requiring us to pay the entrance fee (16,- Euro) normal to US politics e.g. to speak to officials at official lunch dates. I verified with Osorio before his escape that we would be granted tickets this time, because in December when the national party number one was receiving we had quite frankly been managed out of the venue on the grounds of “no space available” for the foreign guests. This time, actually the same was preparing as the bar tender had already informed us in an official-like communication that “tickets were not sold out but currently unavailable” for us i.e. Now João Osorio promised that tickets would be reserved and had to be paid for at the entrance to the venue. We had to do with João the following Saturday before the anniversary as well, as the municipal official who had refused us just like João Osorio separately to hand us over keys of the premises where we were painting and keeping our materials and sketches did not show up as promised on João’s phone the day before at 8:00 and was unavailable for mobile phone calls that morning. The only person hierarchically able to call him to duty was João Osorio. He took 120 minutes to do so while we waited idly in the morning cold. We then spent the evening of Saturday helping at

the PCP premises preparing the anniversary. Of course, there was as the following Sunday not a minute where the PCP number one of Alpiarça would be available for any conversation. We thus repeated to corner him again when back on duty in the municipality the following Monday. Interestingly enough, our cornering tactic was based on evading the personal entrance management by the municipality’s switchboard. The switchboard puts municipal officials on the alert about visitors, who are left to wait up to one and a half hours, often until lunch-break or evening closure of offices when the requested official hastens past them in the entrance hoping for the tactfulness of the visitor not to hook onto him or her on their way home from work. Jumping the switchboard ritual and popping into the offices without notice has been a powerful means of establishing situative democracy and deconstruction of the habitual patriarchal pose. The inspiration for that came from accounts of workers unceremoniously popping into their factory bosses’ offices during the first years after the Cuban revolution. After all, PCP has politically engineered the Cuban take-over of political hegemony in Angola from the defecting Portuguese colonial armies. If there is any executive achievement of PCP besides holding municipal authority in some Portuguese regions it was this brokerage for Cuban military ambitions for Angola. Funnily enough, our disrespect for local patriarchal laws of spacial authority was generally accepted from November until precisely 6<sup>th</sup> of March, the day after the almost simultaneous massive internet attack and the mounting of physical abuse threat on our painting workshop by municipality and PCP affiliates. Yet back on Monday 4<sup>th</sup>, João Osorio cornered again was giving in and said the scaffolding was imminent, details were to be clarified at once with Vitório. As a mobile phone call showed Vitório to be out, we appointed a meeting

for late evening (March 4th) 21:00 at the PCP centro do trabalho for pinning down logistics much in the way we had successfully done so with municipal representatives two weeks before. João was all the while saying that the painting results of the fact that municipal authorities had carved in to our demands were convincing, “very well”, even “astonishing” (he had seen and photographed the most eastern part one of the feria realisation beginning 22<sup>nd</sup> of February. He admitted to the argument of the president that the municipal and party intervention should be kept separate. To this aim he officially envisaged to procure the promised scaffolding from private donors instead of the municipal stocks. He was aware of our offer to change the place where we were living in order to avoid rumour that volunteers living in (derelict) municipal premises were committing work to party premises. Our offer to pay rent for the camping site to establish a clear relation was rejected as our staying there was illegal anyway. Moving out of the premises was equally rejected as not relevant to the case. On the evening of the 4<sup>th</sup> March Vitório received a one hour presentation of all logistical implications of our planned fresco intervention. He reacted with elastic passivity, heeded to all our demands, took personal notes on what materials to procure for us “by tomorrow”, including technical details on the scaffolding. On finishing this strange one-way briefing, João Osorio showed up, shook hands and got to converse with Vitório privately. Funnily though, he later pretended never to have spoken about the building plans with him that evening or later. This is simply not likely to be the case. On the notes by Vitório, I had remarked that they were curiously incomplete, leaving out one fourth of what I had listed for him and what we had agreed upon. On my question why he did not take down the whole of our list, he reacted absently and suggested vaguely, that he had the whole well in

mind and the notes were not really necessary. I also noticed that he was asking me out rightly silly technical questions on scaffolding construction. So either, this technical appointee for PCP had not a very precise idea on how scaffoldings are stabilised in practice, or he was just sucking information out of me, not really caring to ever put into practice what we came to agree upon. He was obviously fulfilling a duty. Curiously enough, that night the gang leader of the next morning’s aggressive mount-up on municipality duty was present, rather drunk. He defied to Vitório from the start, stressing that “You are the one in charge”. I added, that really “the collective is to be in charge” and Vitório in his passively compliant manner of that evening echoed me: “hark, listen what he’s said, the collective is in charge”. Curiously enough, the next morning, it was a collective paid by municipal authorities to shove me out of the building with metal bars and wish me to disappear “fucking to fucking Germany”. So actually, I had got what I had asked for, a collective response. Now, with the supreme party commander in the region I was terribly curious to find out in how far this collective response was perhaps the local translation in popular style of a well-educated and authoritative one-man command.

Octavio received the details of the PCP mock-planning scam with complete calm and did not betray any emotion.

He later took up the topic himself and asked rhetorically: “Do you think we would have appreciated you working and making fuss and disturbing things for two whole months with your building activity at PCP?” I think he had betrayed his main point there. He wanted to preserve his own monopoly of professional activity in the centre, even to the cost of leaving the courtyard in ruins, its walls in pornographic obscenity. He cared a damn about free of

charge building volunteering from Germany/Ukraine. He cared certainly much less about painting. He did not even care to notice that there was a collective. He just addressed that face he had happened to see some times and had felt inclined by past situations to make some rather vague declarations to, declarations using the form of promises expressing political sympathy, intention to collaborate and take up a common fight against austerity and its side effects. Interestingly enough, the enhancement of xenophobic reactions by austerity was part of those courteous conversations from November onwards. Octavio, as we later found out has worked up his way in party hierarchy on a national level by monopolising for himself the topic of overcoming xenophobic tendencies in the Portuguese working class. Already in November however, we noticed some presumable missing links in the political consciousness he expressed to us, most probably well-calculated provocations. He claimed that the very minor phenomena of variety of tactics in the 14<sup>th</sup> November general strike demonstrations in Lisboa were exclusively the “combined work of planned secret agent intervention, but more so of fascists and anarchists”. He claimed that the whole strike day had been negative in public opinion, “and in the opinion of our local party base here just because of those couple of stones” which were presumably thrown at police. For us is really rather scandalous to mention genuinely Antifascist Anarchist and their direct enemies on the street in one enumeration. No left party official in Greece, no matter how envious towards Anarchist mobilisation successes would commit such tactlessness in present Greece. The usual reformist stance of reducing the question of violence to rule-of-law- rationale, state monopoly to aggress is standard. It situates PCP discourse in a broad coalition of side show entertainers to the essentially brutalising agenda of neoliberal

Big Capital rule. In this PCP version of the auxiliary stance accompanying the neoliberal monopoly on open violence, the question of diversity of tactics is not even admitted as a possible discussion but immediately stigmatized with all negative epithets at hand: police agents, fascists and... actually the historical social base for recruiting PCP loyalty in the 1930s in Alpiarça: Anarchism. Even the centenary celebrations around the figure of Álvaro Cunhal by PCP this year, though characteristically dominated, filtered and framed by the interests of the parties endemic right could not avoid showing to the affirmative an anarchist newspaper title in the official party's video release.

5. Clarifying the scope of admittance for protecting party hierarchy with whatever distortion of truth at hand

When he had to listen to the story of the row of false promises by PCP Alpiarça instead of telling the truth about a negative decision or the absence of a positive decision right from the start, Octavio retorted interestingly: “we let you have your exhibition, what do you want?” I reminded him, that it was not my exhibition but the presentation of a collective effort. He seemed to have heard this collective topic earlier already and grunted back unwillingly, “yes, yes, everything's collective”.

6. the pitfalls of masterly oral intrigue: basing the political economy of denunciation on rumour and hear-tell, not caring to corroborate facts reported by lower ranks before proceeding to the



standard repertoire in character  
assassination

Somehow, Octavio was not taking it as easy as he had made an effort to show that he was accused of lying to the foundation Saramago. It is doubtful that he had made the phone-call presenting himself as the representative of the municipality of Alpiarça because he has formally nothing to do with the municipality and is rather used to present himself in much more weighty denominations. But now, he had pragmatically decided to take the whole denunciation incident on his shoulder and he had to sail through the conversation with an acute lack of concrete knowledge on WHAT he had actually said distorting the facts and what was actually the case in the first place. So he lost ground and started swimming: "wasn't it you who had announced that the German ambassador's visit to Alpiarça was a confirmed fact." He was betraying three concerns of him and his staff at a time in this uneasy demand. I had never invoked the ambassador personally, my telephone conversations were with the cultural division and I had suggested that their colleagues in Estonia had once send us a nicely performing intern to an inauguration who had held an admiringly learned and well-informed speech. Obviously the cultural division was somehow interested not to stand behind the staff of SUCH a small German embassy. I had spoken about this funny fact with Dora-João on Thursday, 8<sup>th</sup> of March and also mentioned the idea to invite Maria del Pilar (at that point of time the written invitation had not been out yet, so I would hardly have used the word confirmed. I used it only much later on Saturday, 16<sup>th</sup> March at 11:00 to João Osorio, who had come along to the municipal library just to make sure whether he had successfully destroyed all the

"important" invitations with defamation and dissuasion. I told him that the Ukrainean embassy had indeed confirmed their intention to come with the child of the cultural attaché, Viktoria. I had a lengthy telephone conversation in which she explained all the details of her planning. That is what I call a confirmation. Al did call no other invitation confirmed. At the present stage we have evidence of denunciation at the foundation Saramago, there is a very high likelihood that the campaign addressed the German ambassador. In this sense, Octavio was just repeating the list received by Dora-João with the word I used for the Ukrainian embassy towards João Osorio. Obviously, he had very loyal informants, but the whole power house was relying on hear-tell. A person of authority in this derivative of a rural workers' street-corner society would rather not take to written testimony or try to corroborate a fact from hear-tell with the subaltern element from which it issues. PCP is a secondary generation's business now, who has taken over from masters of rural and informal conspiracy enabling them to survive for decades under fascist police surveillance. There are sets of neurosis, nobody will blame PCP for, which last more than one generation.

As for the Ukrainian embassy, Viktoria later said that exactly that Saturday, she was ordered to stay in and do administrative work, which is a likely posture of higher authority in Ukrainian office routine to censure the movement and commitment of lower staff without informing why and what exactly they are not to fulfil promise. Actually the social damage repair with the German embassy by PCP officials in the course of the developments in Alpiarça has clearly taken a much higher priority as we will see under point 8.

7. the master's habitual top down view on outsiders active in his dominion Alpiarça's public and cultural life

In the world view of a lonely top in Ribatejo PCP hierarchy, there is the normality of standstill in political life and debate and there are problems. Problems call for authority. At a certain point of the conversation, Octavio started to use surprisingly plain talk. And he could not easily be interrupted then. "YOU are just creating problems!" He explained sullenly. Obviously, wanting to paint in the political context of his realm of power was amounting to just wanting to create problems. "And not enough with that, then you take to blow up those problems to be bigger than yourself." As for him I am certainly very, very small, it obviously does not need much blowing for that, maybe normal breathing is just enough to make the nuisance complete in his eyes.

I was so tempted to laugh, but I thought about the party veterans I had learned to know in Alpiarça, those who had lived decades in illegal conditions, real examples for me personally. I also thought about the many proletarian friends we had made and how firmly they believed that this PCP paper tiger would bite capitalism one day (may it do so, during the last 70 years it actually managed not really to bite, but certainly to kind of piss off some US agents in Angola for some years after decolonisation and it did cause some troubles to big landowners in southern Portugal for a couple of months after 1974 when then had to transfer their wealth a bit to get off with it, that is about all but we are certainly curious what is to come more). So with Octavio being the lonely profiteer of so much projections of proletarian hope all around the metal bar region, I tried to remain factual: "well, who cares to take a

closer look will notice that we actually took some time and trouble to try to sort out and RESOLVE the problems created by false promises you and your subordinate chain of command issued over the last half year. Do you actually think that my account on being attacked physically by a party colleague of yours with metal bars was me CREATING a problem? I mean, do you actually think my account is untrue. That would be position I could comment."

8. "o.k., metal bars is not the right technique to rebuke strangers here"

No, no, he hastened to confirm, that was not o.k. I have no doubt that you reported the facts correctly on the metal bar attack. "And there were anti-german chauvinist slurs accompanying the attack", I reminded him. He noticeably lowered his glance at that. Yet, his next move showed that he did not want to end the point on this note. So he quite challengingly looked past me to my right and instructed "we are a peaceful region here, you know! It's you who has created the problems." This is a well-known figure of thought and I was glad to have the PCP expert on xenophobia in front of me and not some kind of uneasy improvisation at apology. Of course for every modern Anti-Semite on earth since 1903 the real origin of all the trouble is the stranger her- or himself. And of course every successful pogrom brought a region to peace again.

My intention is exactly the opposite of what I am accused of by Octavio. I have no interest at all in dramatizing incidences of chauvinist violence in Portugal. But me and probably him as well have both a vital interest in bringing elements of xenophobia to light to resolve the legitimate resolutions of contradictions

which happen to stick to them BEFORE they amalgamate into a dynamic we both well know, one of socialising successful violent discrimination among working class people into an everyday practice of dividing a fight that can only be won together.

9. "if you have any complaints, feel free to denounce our old-time party members to the bourgeois justice system"

He then suggested to me to make a complaint to the Republican Guards, GNR. I asked him to confirm if I had understood him right. "Do you actually urge me to press charges with the class adversary against an old-time party member, is that what you counsel me." "Yes, that is what you have to do if you are feeling aggressed."

10. the crucial difference between German government power projection for representation in Alpiarça and actual Portuguese police power in town

At that point Octavio was getting really angry for the first time. His voice rose out of control and he went over to a telling rhetorical figure on losing his temper: "and reporting to the German ambassador, was THAT not collaborating with the class enemy?" His rhetorical question was put forth in a menacing voice, he had approached my face with a hissing sound and was repeating this precise question two times right into my face. The more people tell in anger, the more you can learn about their way of processing social information and organising the political economy of threats and intimate infringement so essential for constructing

authority. On 5<sup>th</sup> February, after noticing that Celestino Brasileiro would not react to my SMS via Sergio telling about the aggressive intervention of his work gang against painting activity, I discussed the events of the morning in the municipal library. The staff there was at once putting out guesses who could be the central perpetrator. There are habitual predators, using physical aggression at the workplace to fellow-dependants in the municipal authorities of Alpiarça. These habitual aggressors are widely known on an informal understanding. Officially there seems to be no policy confronting their attitudes. So, I took to further recognisance to explore the chauvinist dimension of the aggressive acts. I wrote a letter to the German embassy in Lisboa asking whether such attacks with political-chauvinist elements are a more frequent phenomenon. With this letter, not mentioning Alpiarça, the region or my volunteering workplace at all, I wanted also to conduct or forward the discomfort caused by the aggressive stance to those professionally assuming representation and responsibility for the effects of current German policies towards Portugal. Two days later, I got a telling answer in the sense that: "if the incident you mention has happened in Portugal, as we are lead to interpret from your words, we must tell you that we have no record of other such attacks up to now." Of course, they would probably not communicate any such incident known to them other than up the chain of command. It is clear from their response, that Alpiarça or the nature of my involvement there, the official investigation started next day, all that was not issue of the letter exchange. It is common practice to communicate any physical aggression in a given country to the embassy formally responsible for the passport holder, I explained next day to the President in a meeting of private character (without switchboard arrangement, that would be next to impossible, I would have had to

wait until official reception time on Mondays then and whenever I try to get an official on official reception time during the 5 months we were active for Alpiarça, they would not be available to be met). The president obviously misunderstood the scope of communication I would engage in with the German embassy. First mistake by Octavio and his subaltern collaborators is to believe, that the affairs at the embassy are a matter of the ambassador. To the contrary compartmentalisation is primordial for simple citizens' concerns such as mine. So the Rechtsabteilung and the Kulturabteilung were to be contacted. Funnily enough, The municipal library got a phone call two days before our inauguration which I was to receive. It came actually from the Wirtschaftsabteilung, as its secretary was at that shift taking on the duties of private secretary attending the ambassador himself. She would say a very formal official text to the effect that the ambassador will certainly not attend the inauguration. I thanked for the information and said that we had never expected the ambassador to come and what request or invitation was she actually answering to. She replied diplomatically that she could not tell me that, that she only had the job to tell me, he would not come. She then lost her role, because for her trained German working routine this was getting too funny, she started to tell me all sort of things she did not necessarily need to tell me about why the economic department has taken the duty of the private secretary of the ambassador for the day etc. There was obviously someone in the channel of information who operated on hear-tell and now the confrontation of actual facts was getting close to absurd. It can by now be said quite surely, that PCP Alpiarça tried to wipe out something at the German embassy they were not quite sure what it was. So Alpiarça back-stabbing based on street-corner-rumours was colliding with one with the most formal and efficient neo-

colonial bureaucracies in current European restructuring. The effect this collusion produced due to systematic misunderstanding was tragi-comical. PCP could as it had show intervene in the workings not only of a dissident communist Spanish cultural figure like Maria del Pilar and her foundation Saramago but even in the daily routine of a neo-colonial embassy whose sender country is a regular torment to its paying members proletarian existences. PCP could do all that thanks to its discipline and pragmatism to serve its own institutional existence. BUT TO WHAT ENDS?

11. a politician leaving the extensive conversation without a word and a definitely acid smile

"What are you taking these notes for?" Octavio suddenly asked in a rather menacing voice. I answered calmly that I wanted to write a more detailed account of our conversation and publish it on the internet as I thought his statements to be of real public interest. He turned on his heels, sourly smiling and went away without a word. That was the farewell I got from PCP. Did I deserve any better as a proletarian worker of the brush without pay for half a year and now definitely without a job left in the whole of Ribatejo?

How can we jointly prevent this to happen again? How can we achieve freedom from xenophobic and denunciatory attitudes in the issuing (CMA) and receiving institution (Casa dos Bicos) involved?

Dear Maria del Pilar,

We very much regretted that you decided not to come to our mural

inauguration. Some photos capturing the nice atmosphere have already spread through the Ukrainian net: [smotri.te.ua/287607](http://smotri.te.ua/287607)

There was however a shadow lying over the exhibition. It was like so many times in left voluntary initiatives: something was heavily muffling the whole conversion process and for almost a week we could not say whom or what. Maybe we were just victims of a conspiracy theory of our own making? We did the whole development seem so rigged against us for months now? In the end, we found out what was really being played behind our backs between two Portuguese officialist institutions and were really shocked to find out. It was done all so primitively and mean. There is one fraction of CDU here in Alpiarca which is viciously working against us behind the scenes. We knew about that, this destructive policy has made our life very difficult during the last half year. What we did not know was how easy Saramago foundation became part of their excellent negative performance. We knew that they would rather not want see you here: that's exactly why we invited you.

In the country we come from Communist party orthodoxy has done a lot of damage to left agendas for generations to come. We were happy to have you as an out-spoken advocate of non-orthodoxy on our invited-list... alas the PCP endemic right and its militant backing in Alpiarca backwater had its way and your foundation played their game. It feels so mean that we had to discover that on ourselves. Why did your foundation not contact us to verify the defamations from that Alpiarca endemic right-wingers? How could they get away with so many lies and have your foundation staff just believe them? have they decided "not to want to have to do anything with us at all now" as your director Sérgio Machado Letria put it, before giving us, the artists, the chance to have a word on this?

But this is too shocking to rush it. So, let's reconstruct the facts one by one as far as the testimonies we drew together allow us to do at this point in time:  
We now know that...

- Between Thursday, March 7, 2013 and Wednesday, March 13, 2013 1:57 pm, a

person called the foundation José Saramago, presenting himself as the authorised secretary speaking officially for the Câmara Municipal de Alpiarça (CMA). From this self-introduction we conclude that the caller may by some probability have been Joao Osorio, though at this point of time in the investigation process the only testimony corroborating this presumption yet is the one by the director of Casa dos Bicos (Fundacao José Saramago) Sérgio Machado.

The caller then proceeded out of his own initiative to denounce the painting collective which had worked as volunteers paying for their own wall painting colours and all other expenses with 6 bits of pseudo-information which are in sharp contrast to the real facts as they should have been known to the caller when effectuating his phone call.

Denunciation out of touch with reality: no. ONE

He pretended that the collective was using the name of Maria del Pilar del Río Sanchez Saramago in public, which is not true to the facts. During the whole process of preparation and inauguration of the exhibition at Biblioteca Municipal (16.3) the name of Maria del Pilar has not been mentioned in print, on the official website of the exhibition ([archive.org/details/ABRILdeNovo](http://archive.org/details/ABRILdeNovo)) or in any spoken word in inauguration proceedings. Her name does not appear neither in the exhibition texts nor in the published catalogue (ISBN 978-989-20-3738-7).

Denunciation out of touch with reality: no. TWO

He actually made the case that the name of José Saramago, as well as the one of Maria del Pilar has been abused publicly for private interest of the artists. In the case of the accusation concerning the name of Maria del Pilar, this denunciation is without substance as clarified in point no. ONE. The name of José Saramago indeed has been used in public communication by the artists. To be exact its use is strictly limited to ascribing 5 citations from a work of his. The artists took 'great care to mark every citation with the page number, and - as typographic

consideration and the necessary suppression of repetitious technical bibliographical information allowed them on the wall – not only the title of the book but also the 1st edition with its publication year to make the page reference and the reference to a historic book, available in almost every Portuguese public library clear to every reader. In no instance has José Saramago been cited by the artists without quotation marks or abridging his words, etc. The name of José Saramago has in printed text, internet publications and official speech at the inauguration been mentioned for the sole purpose of marking the used citations correctly. No other mentioning of his name has been endeavoured by the artists. Please note that in the official catalogue of the exhibition their care for precise citation could take to greater length than on the wall painting premises, so there you find quotation marks, his full name, the full title of the book, and its year of publication as well as the page cited collocated to every single one of the five citations approved by the CMA decision process and by the redaction of the President of CMA personally on 18th of February 2013.

Denunciation out of touch with reality: no. THREE

The caller in the name of an official CMA stance took to a different topic then, suggesting somehow to explain the denunciations number ONE and TWO to the director of Casa dos Bicos. He pretended that the international artists in Alpiarça "abuse" the names of Maria del Pilar and José Saramago for the intention of persuing personal profit in form of a grant from Saramago foundation. This insinuation has no base in reality at all. No grant application has been submitted by the denounced artists to Saramago Foundation to this date. To the contrary, the artists have, as the catalogue documents in details, up to the 16th of March contracted the amount of 6.799,00 Euro personal depts for the benefit of CMA premises. To orient the wall-painting in Alpiarça on the works of Saramago has been the personal initiative of the president of CMA, Mário Pereira, in a meeting on 16th of January 2013. The artists welcomed this proposal. It is clear that without this personal initiative by the president, the artists would CERTAINLY NOT have included the name of Saramago in their work and of

course never would have contacted the Casa dos Bicos in this matter. The artists are grateful to Mr. Pereira for this initiative. They took it up willingly and with a great effort to grasp the dimension of the Portuguese language legacy of comrade José. As to alleviating the personal debt incurred by the artists to carry out this idea. CMA has up to now promised in a characteristically unclear mode of making promises to the contributors of voluntary work commitment to pay for their natural gas use and some material expenditures as well as "compensate for the effort". None of these three promises have materialised up to 23rd of March 2013. The artists have bought natural gas for the realisation of the mural on their own private accounts and have paid personally without any further aid from CMA for every single material input to CMA murals, including the colours and planning materials up to this day (23rd of March 2013). Now, the CMA is perfectly free to put out denunciations to the effect of destroying 3rd party funding opportunities. The artists accept this CMA policy, though they cannot really welcome it. Likewise, a private Swiss sponsor who wanted to finance CMA budgets with direct subventions intended to support the wall painting process has effectively been rebuked by CMA handling of his offer. First, CMA did not forward technical financial data as promised to effectuate the sponsor transaction for months on end. Then the sponsor was rebuked altogether by a strikingly little transparent handling of the internal CMA investigation into xenophobic threats of physical attacks on one of the volunteer during work time by CMA employees within CMA premises (Protocol and extensive political assessment published by the exhibition catalogue team at [http://archive.org/details/ABRIL\\_deNovo\\_textsOnly](http://archive.org/details/ABRIL_deNovo_textsOnly)). The results of the internal investigation into this so-called "Maria Apolónia"-incident of 5th March have been summarised by Joao Osorio as the official spokesman of the CMA secretariat on 11th of March as "that" (the physical attack threatening to hit metal bars on the volunteers head) "was nothing". Such a policy towards violence at the workplace within CMA could not convince the Swiss sponsor to prolong his funding engagement for CMA activities.

Possible misunderstanding, number FOUR

The caller of CMA to Casa dos Bicos made a series of other statements, according to the testimony by Sergio Machado Letria (mentioned in his conversation with doctor Martin Kraemer on 21st of March). Mr Machado Letria said that these statements together were decisive for the role the foundation has been taking towards the Alpiarça murals since the call until 22nd of March, 13:00 Lisbon time. One of these bits of information from CMA let Mr Machado Letria conclude that the exposition "was too big for Casa dos Bicos" and that the Foundation "was not interested any more".

The first possible misunderstanding is that CMA could propose some kind of exhibition on the mural process. This is not the case. CMA is merely the holder of the premises where the murals themselves were accomplished. CMA

has no other legal link with the artistic heritage linked to the project, its preparation and its photographic documentation. Only the artists themselves can propose, exhibit or send any part or elaboration upon this heritage to other places and institutions. The artists pursue a strict anti-copyright line. But freedom to use their artistic work for other purposes does not include the possibility to take this work under self-assumed patronage.

Possible misunderstanding, number FIVE

The statement that the exhibition on the murals was "too big for Casa dos Bicos" is somehow disquieting. The project by the artists for follow-up exhibitions to the Biblioteca of CMA does NOT conceptualize to simply export the exhibition to other places. Instead the artists will for each spatial setting conceptualize a different and new exhibition. This includes the so-called micro-exhibition variant of under 2 square metres the artists explicitly include in their current offer to institutions in Portugal and internationally.

To put it mildly, we, the authors of the mural work on José Saramago in Alpiarça, are not amused by the agency of the self-declared representation of CMA in the process described above. We would like to see an internal

investigation to be carried out for both institutions concerned by this extremely disturbing process, CMA and Casa dos Bicos. This investigation should be able to issue a written answer to the artists concerned by the distortion of facts (please send to [cravos@riseup.net](mailto:cravos@riseup.net)) at least addressing the following 5 basic questions:

1. Who was the caller pretending to speak officially for CMA?
2. What line of command authorised this call and its communication content?
3. Why did neither CMA nor Casa dos Bicos tried to corroborate the alleged facts by addressing the denounced artists on their own initiative, ie. why did the artists have to discover the fact out of their own by drawing lots of rather unpleasant bits of information together by their own efforts?

What kind of "informed decisions" would have been taken if the artists actually hadn't discovered the facts upon their own account?

4. Which institutional decisions have been influenced by the misinformation outlined already? How can it be assured that the facts prevail and denunciation and distortion of the truth will not affect institutional and personal decisions any more from now on?

5. How do both institutions involved in the case envisage confronting the structural problems illustrated by this incident, which can be vaguely characterised as (a) tendentially xenophobic, trusting compatriots all the while basically distrusting non-Portuguese passport-holders, (b) discriminatory towards voluntary work, respecting salaried hierarchies and their insinuations more than direct testimony from the makers of the artistic contribution, (c) eliminatory instead of pluralistic, trying to clean out the public space of cultural contributions by politically and socially committed activists, instead of fostering a climate of tolerance towards various modes of artistic expression? What guidelines will be issued to prevent developments of this unfavourable nature in the future?

With respect for your attention,

Alpiarça, the 22nd of March 2013

the international volunteers of the Saramago mural in Alpiarça

Some Comments on re-reading José António Saraiva and Vicente Jorge Silva. 1976. O 25 de Abril Visto da História, Do 25 Abril às Presidenciais falando do século XIX, da República, de Salazar. Lisboa: Livraria Bertrand.

Cited here according to the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of 1977 using the library of Mário Braga (entry 27<sup>th</sup> September 1977, reg. no. 2126). This book has a personal dedication hard pencil signs on more than half of the pages and three remarks in Braga's hand-writing. My signs and numeration of arguments for discussion are in soft pencil (B9).

The authors are well-informed publishers of their times. They like Marx and largely draw from Gramsci as was fashionable in their times. Their "anti-ideological" mission especially to clean up some of the most blatant left propaganda stunts following the Portuguese revolution is historically interesting. Obviously they were not yet touched by the post-structuralist victory over leftist analysis to see everything, even their anti-ideological stance as ideology. There is something of the impetus of the critique of pure reason in their method of critiquing their times. This is at once antiquated and keeping to their analysis just what the "retarded situation" (their words) of the "Portuguese banana republic" (Tiago's words) could need.

Their gesture of catching the objects causing the shades and not hushing after shades themselves is admirable and refreshing. They have a good reasoning

work-shop. They are virtuous in deconstructing propaganda, it is obvious, that they have won their education striving with an oppressive and retarding system (Portuguese fascism).

Yet, they are very fascinated by a show put on for some years in neighbouring countries called "Eurocommunism", a liquidator's interest of little interest today. And they anticipate the following sophism after the Gramsci cult: the smooth shift towards Hannah Ahrend Heideggerisms of "totalitarian", yes there is even some Popperian (later Sorosh-school) non-sense in it about liberal repression (they clearly see, mentioning Meinhof, eg.) being all the while so wonderfully open society business and all the rest on the left being closed and "ideological". They are clearly posing as intellectual, ie. out for sale. They want a piece of the pie nourishing their Western European left troublemakers in the service of the late Keynesian Appeasement state. Spain is curiously absent in their analysis, which might pass as a concession to facilitate their transit to Europe (planes to circumvent the persisting fascist nightmare nearby when going to France were not that cheap those days). Smashing myths on the Portuguese left, they create their own ones. They are interested in material advancement. They have high hopes in "maturing" the Portuguese capitalist nightmare to a full-blown revolutionary-industrial situation. They want to see farming marginalised, middle-class proletarianised, contradictions of capitalism to get in full swing as in England. Curiously enough, the current breakdown of EU facades to neoliberal agendas brings reality in Portugal so much closer to their dreams. As for many left gambling personal trying out different intellectual poses in the late 1970s they have high hopes in the Western European



process of creating wealth for seemingly working class interests. They think they are familiar with the voracity and brutality of European capital let loose on Portuguese accumulation resources. They trust to nice little analogies. When Portugal lost its direct grip on Brazilian looting-grounds for gold and diamonds, the Portuguese bourgeois consumers replaced its stream of wealth with credit from Europe. Integration into European Union destructivity is something they welcome in the view of creating Eurocommunism and a private communistic safe-haven of lecturing power over future working class subjects.

...to be continued

That's all quite abstruse and yet the usual generation treachery we find among leftist intellectuals of our father's generation all over western Europe. Doing their academicist bread-work of cultivating "d'être orgueilleux de critique / conceited in their criticism" they dissect some truly fascinating aphorisms on Portuguese contradictions. I loved to read them in one go from early morning to late night. It is like coming home to the critical laboratory of my childhood, the calm of perusing abstract and no matter how provincial thoughts in view of a cosmopolitan future. When being left is the standard, some awful mannerisms of today's social forum stunt-(wo)men courting petty-bourgeois sentiment for bourgeois communism fall of the band-waggon and we are left with the useful illusions of a time when Western left imagined a victory independent of Soviet Russia far left of social Democracy. The wto authors clearly see the blockades of the northern European institutionalisation of working class movement potential.

There are some ugly parts to their self-righteous monologues and rants against less well-worded left neighbours. I was most repelled by the anti-feminist stand against Isabel do Carmo (169).